

OXFORD PAMPHLETS ON WORLD AFFAIRS
No. 1

THE
PROSPECTS OF
CIVILIZATION

BY
ALFRED ZIMMERN

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1939

IN this pamphlet the author discusses the factors that have destroyed internationalism in the modern period, the necessity for applying moral standards to political relations, and the problem of adjusting the social and political habits and traditions of mankind to the conditions of the modern world.

Sir Alfred Zimmern is Montague Burton Professor of International Relations in the University of Oxford. His principal works are *The Greek Commonwealth*, *Nationality and Government*, *Europe in Convalescence*, *The Third British Empire*, *Prospects of Democracy*, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law*.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

AMEN HOUSE, E.C. 4

London Edinburgh Glasgow New York

Toronto Melbourne Capetown Bombay

Calcutta Madras

HUMPHREY MILFORD

PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

Optimism and Pessimism

TWENTY years ago there was a widespread mood of optimism in the English-speaking countries about the future of international relations and of modern civilization as a whole. President Wilson had launched the idea of a League of Nations, and the war-weary world saw in it the sure hope of a new order in which armed conflicts between States would be a thing of the past and the peoples would be bound together in ties of common brotherhood and regular co-operation. Voices were even heard, not only on the platform but in the pulpit, reviving old notions of the millennium and suggesting that the League of Nations was destined to be the first instalment of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth.

Opinion has now swung, under the impact of disillusionment, to the opposite pole. A bleak pessimism is the order of the day. The failure of the League of Nations—or rather of the principal States in its membership—to solve the political and economic problems left outstanding by the War has led to doubts as to the future of civilization itself. It is even suggested that, in a world so torn by dissension and so exposed to imminent catastrophe, life itself is no longer worth living and that nothing remains for the civilized peoples but to abandon themselves to a suicidal despair and to cease to perpetuate their kind.

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

It is the object of these pages to examine the underlying issues which have been responsible for these successive moods and to show that neither of them is justifiable in the light of the facts. The optimism of 1919 was premature and misplaced. Its greatest error was in its failure to recognize the *dimensions* of the problem that lay before the civilized peoples. It imagined that that problem could be solved within a few years or decades by the setting up of a new type of political machinery. But the pessimism of 1939 is even more misplaced, since it is discouraging the peoples from persevering in a task which it is unmanly to evade and for which, thanks to the teaching of experience, they are now far better equipped than they were a generation ago.

The Threefold Nature of the Problem

What is the problem which is baffling and discouraging us in 1939?

Is it the problem of our relations with the Totalitarian States—or rather with certain Totalitarian States?

Certainly that problem exists, and in a very pressing form; and the most baffling feature about it is that, as between ourselves and the present rulers of Germany, we have reached a condition of deadlock, at once political, intellectual, and moral, in which no real exchange of ideas, and therefore no understanding, is at present possible.

But this deadlock itself only reveals that the immediate problem of our relations with the German

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

Government is part of a much greater and deeper problem. What is this?

Is the *political* problem of our relations with Germany, as also with Italy and Japan, only a surface phenomenon? Is the real substance of the problem of our relations with these governments and their peoples *economic*—the problem involved in the *injustice* of the existence, side by side, of rich Powers and poor Powers, of Powers possessing within their borders ample supplies of foodstuffs and industrial raw materials, and of others less amply endowed by Nature? Ought not the German, the Italian, and the Japanese peoples to have an equal opportunity with the peoples of Great Britain, France, and the United States of sharing in the world's resources? And ought not the governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan to have an equal opportunity with the governments of the great democratic States of providing their peoples with the well-being which such resources can provide? And, by the same reasoning, ought not such equal opportunities to be afforded, in the name of Justice, to all the world's peoples, whether great or small, powerful or weak, advanced or backward?

But if we admit this claim for equality of opportunity—and how can we deny *as between peoples* a claim that we would not nowadays dream of disputing *as between our own fellow citizens*?—we cannot help noticing at the same time that the very governments which are complaining of the poverty of the resources at their disposal—the governments

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

of the so-called 'Have Not' Powers—are systematically using such resources as they possess, or can acquire by diplomatic and other means, not to increase the welfare and to raise the standard of life of their peoples, or even to develop their productive energies with a view to their welfare in the future, but in order to add to their military strength and to make themselves immune from embargoes or blockade—in short, to be able to cut themselves off more effectually from intercourse with the rest of the world.

This reveals that the *economic* problem arising out of the unequal distribution of the world's resources amongst the world's peoples is related to a deeper problem—a problem involving the *motive* for which these resources are required in each case. And this *conflict of motives*—the motive of consolidating military power on the one hand and the motive of diffusing welfare on the other—cannot be settled by the sweeping away of trade barriers, or even of barriers to migration, or indeed by any solution on the purely economic plane. For motives belong to the realm of morals, not of economics. Thus a so-called 'Economic Conference', the parties to which entered upon the discussion with policies inspired by differing motives, would be foredoomed to failure. The deadlock would be there from the beginning, in the minds of the participants. For a conflict of motives is, at bottom, a conflict between moral ideas: and, when it is an organized conflict, it is a conflict between *moral systems*.

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

But is there not another kind of economic issue more rightly deserving of the name of 'the economic problem'—the problem involved in the coexistence side by side within the same community of rich people and poor people, of a *class* of rich people and a *class* of poor people?

Certainly there is such a problem in most, if not all, countries in the present-day world. And this is a problem that cannot be solved by any transfer of territory from one Power to another: for it is manifestly due to some cause, or causes, of a general nature operating *across* the boundaries of states—causes bound up in some way with the general economic system of the world.

Thus we find that the problem which is baffling us can be broken up into three separate elements. There is a *political* problem, of which the most acute symptom is the existing relationship between the democratic States on the one hand—particularly Great Britain and France—and the Totalitarian States—particularly Germany—on the other. There is an *economic* problem, of which the most acute symptom is the contrast between riches and poverty, which we all of us have continually before our eyes, even in a country like Great Britain, where the general standard of life is immeasurably higher than it is for the greater part of mankind. And, thirdly, there is a *moral* problem, of which the most acute symptom is the startling decline in the standard of international relations, and in the standards of humanity and decency—not to speak of

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

justice and liberty—in the domestic government of certain reputedly civilized states.

Let us take these three problems one by one: for it is only by disentangling them from the complex mass of which they form a part that we shall be able to gain an understanding of the situation as a whole.

We will take them in the order of their importance, which is the reverse of the order of their urgency.

The moral problem is the most important, but, seemingly, at any rate, the least urgent, since it is a *permanent* problem in all political life.

The economic problem is less urgent than the political, since it is a *long-distance* problem arising out of the general conditions of *modern* life—that is, life under the conditions produced by the Industrial Revolution.

The political problem is the most urgent, because, as we all realize, it is a *short-distance* problem that may make calls upon us at any moment.

The Permanent Problem

Ever since men began to think about politics, in Ancient Greece, in China, in India and elsewhere, it has been recognized that there is a standing conflict between moral ideals and political realities. At no time, not even under the best of rulers, has political life been as pure as the best type of private life—life in a harmonious family or among close friends.

This is a difficulty which is in the nature of

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

things. There are only two ways of dealing with it. One is to withdraw from all participation in political life, which, in the modern world, involves withdrawal from ordinary social life also: for the private citizen cannot divest himself of responsibility for the use made of the money that he pays in taxes. This is the *monastic* solution which has appealed to some minds in every period of Christianity. Short of this solution, which admits of no half-measures, the only other course is to face the problem, with all the strain that that involves upon man's moral nature. That is the interpretation usually placed upon the text: *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's*.

The strain involved for our moral nature in rendering Caesar his due is twofold.

In the first place, when we are dealing with Caesar—that is to say, when we are engaging in politics in any way, even quite passively by forming a political opinion, we are in a large-scale, impersonal world removed from actual human contact with the individuals on whose affairs and interests we are forming a judgement. It is, therefore, much harder to bring our ordinary moral attitudes—such as sympathy, patience, kindness, and scrupulous justice—into play than in private life. Every one knows how hard it is to feel a proper conscientious scruple in the treatment of tax-collectors and Custom House officials.

Moreover, it is not a case of simply transferring moral attitudes from the private to the public sphere—of feeling towards the tax-collector as we feel

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

towards our friends or the members of our own family. It is a question of applying these moral attitudes to a particular sphere which has technical problems, if not standards, of its own. This is a familiar problem in the professions. Doctors, from the time of the origins of the medical profession, have had an etiquette which is, within its limited field, a moral standard of their own—certainly, at its best, not below that of the rest of the community. In the same way, there is an etiquette of political life and an etiquette of civil life. In other words, there is a way of moralizing Caesar, of making him a moral being, of adjusting the moral life of the individual to political conditions and political needs. But it is not easy for the ordinary citizen to discover this way or to work out all the details, so far as they concern himself, especially in the complex conditions of the modern world, and that is why so many people to-day are inclined to abandon the attempt and to sink into being 'non-politically minded'. By so doing they are becoming monks without the saving virtue of the monk, his faith in the active power of prayer.

The second element of strain involved in all political life is due to the fact that politics is concerned with *power* and that power is a dangerous thing. Politics is concerned with power because politics is concerned with government, and government involves making decisions and ensuring that they are carried out—if necessary by the use of force. Every government is, therefore, as we say,

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

'in power'. Power is, so to speak, the currency of politics: power is, for politics, what money is for economics. Power is, in itself, neither good nor bad. It is neutral, colourless. It may be well used or ill used. How it is used depends on the motives—and also the skill—of those who use it. But, like wealth, it carries with it great temptations, and great opportunities for misuse—so great that the experience of mankind has concluded that human nature is too frail to be entrusted with uncontrolled power. That is why so much of the political thinking of the past has been directed to discovering how to place checks on power without interfering with its efficient use, how, as it were, to put Caesar in harness—the harness of a constitution—without interfering with his paces.

These two difficulties have faced rulers and their subjects and citizens from the beginning of organized political life. But they have been greatly intensified by the conditions of the present day. This intensification is due to two causes.

The first of these is the *enlargement of the scale* of political life through the multiplication of international contacts. A great part of Caesar's business is to-day not concerned simply with national affairs but with international affairs—that is to say with the interests of men and women of many different peoples and races in all parts of the world. This makes it even more difficult to bring moral standards to bear on them than under the older conditions. If it is hard for a member of Parliament

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

or for a private shareholder to remember his duty to act justly towards Welsh miners or Lancashire cotton operatives, it is even harder for him to feel the same moral compunction towards the so-called 'coolies' on an Indian or Ceylonese tea-estate or the Africans in the gold-mines on the Rand—or even towards European peoples who may be physically much less far away but are often quite as remote from the daily thoughts of the ordinary Englishman.

The second difficulty goes even deeper. Men find it hard to-day to apply moral standards to politics because they are so often not sure of their own moral standards. Fifty years ago—even twenty years ago—it could be claimed that Europe and the English-speaking world overseas were Christian—not indeed that life in that area came up to the Christian standard, but that the existence of such a standard was at least openly recognized. Homage was paid to it, if often only with the lips, and there was shame in openly transgressing it.

This condition was no doubt in large part a survival from a previous age when the Christian standard of morals was armed with a 'sanction' of its own—the fear of eternal punishment. The kings, princes, cardinals, and other great ones of the medieval age knew that retribution was in store for them, elsewhere than in the arena of politics, if they lapsed grievously from the accepted standard of righteous dealing. But to-day, over a large part of the field of international relations, this sanction is

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

no longer operative and nothing else has as yet taken its place. There are men in the saddle, holding the reins of power, who are afraid of nothing except defeat, and ashamed of nothing except a diminution of their prestige. Until recently political life was a system of checks and balances: the checks were partly constitutional and partly moral. To-day, in the countries that are setting the tone of international politics, both these checks have been removed. The result is that the balance of the world's public life has been destroyed.

Moreover, we must not forget that international relations are no longer only carried on, as they used to be in the West, between nominally Christian peoples. The so-called Family of States which is supposed to be bound by the rules of International Law includes several for whose rulers and peoples the Christian tradition, of which that body of law was an outgrowth, has no meaning whatsoever—except perhaps as a reminder of the deviation between Western professions and Western practice. Is it surprising then that, in this condition of moral chaos, the standard of behaviour in international politics should have sunk to a lower level than at any time since the partition of Poland towards the close of the eighteenth century—if not lower still? Is it not rather a cause for wonder that the momentum of the older systems should have lasted so long and that the collapse that we are now witnessing did not occur earlier?

Is there any remedy for this condition?

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

Yes and No.

Of course, there is no complete remedy. There is no way of getting rid, once and for all, of the *tension* between moral ideals and political realities. As has already been said, that tension, that mal-adjustment, lies in the nature of things political—indeed of things earthly.

Yet there is much that could be done, and should indeed have been done long ago, to assist all those in democratic countries who desire to do their political duty in applying their inner standards to outer circumstances with greater knowledge and a surer grasp of political principle.

Political conditions are far too fluid to admit of any rigid formulation of rules, such as was attempted by the Christian teachers in the medieval period. Nevertheless there is a middle ground between doctrinaire rigidity on the one hand and a pliable opportunism on the other. It is perfectly possible to lay down general principles of political conduct which can afford sure guidance in particular circumstances, as they arise. There is no space to develop this theme in these pages. It is enough to say that until a more resolute effort has been made to bridge over the gulf that has existed for centuries in our own and other Western countries between Sunday precepts and week-day practice—a bridge that needs to be constructed from both ends—there is little hope for substantial progress in the solution of particular economic and political problems.

The Long-distance Problem

The long-distance problem is the problem of adjusting the social and political habits and traditions of mankind to the conditions brought about by the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution is the name given in retrospect by historians to a process that took its rise from certain inventions made, chiefly in Great Britain, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

These inventions were themselves the outcome of the adoption of a new method—the so-called scientific or experimental method—for the advancement of knowledge in the natural world and of discoveries made through it by men of science in Western countries from the early seventeenth century onwards. Two English names hold a prominent place in this record—that of Francis Bacon, the pioneer of scientific method, and that of Isaac Newton, who discovered the law of gravitation. These men and their colleagues scattered through laboratories and places of learning throughout the Western World were the prime movers in a process which, when it attained momentum towards the close of the eighteenth century, brought about in a few generations a transformation in the external conditions of human life such as, in all previous ages, it had taken mankind thousands of years to accomplish. The world in which George III came to the throne and George Washington grew up was, in its externals, closer to the world of Pharaoh,

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

Nebuchadnezzar, Julius Caesar, and Charlemagne than to the world of George VI and Franklin Roosevelt.

We are all familiar with the paraphernalia of that Revolution, with the railways and steamships and power-looms and the other machines of the First Industrial Age—that of coal and iron—and with the motor-car, the aeroplane, the wireless, and other inventions of the Second Industrial Age—that of electricity, the internal combustion engine, and the lighter metals. Indeed we are so familiar with them that we tend to take them for granted, as though they were a kind of windfall, enabling us to enjoy new comforts and conveniences without any disturbance of old ideas and habits. But we have no right to be mere parasites upon the bounty of Science. The effort made by the thinkers, inventors, and organizers who brought about the Industrial Revolution and are developing its revolutionary activities day by day calls for a similar effort on our part—the effort to control these new forces and to direct them into beneficent channels, to turn the Industrial Revolution into a *Social Revolution*, that is to say, to turn what began as an *economic* process, a change in the economic system of the world, into a process that will transform the *social* life of mankind, so that the results that the scientists have wrested from Nature may be used, in Francis Bacon's words, 'for the relief of man's estate'.

The new possibilities that the Industrial Revolution holds out for mankind can be summed up in

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

three words: *Power*, *Abundance*, and *Interdependence*.

From time immemorial men have earned their livelihood by 'the sweat of their brow'. At the base of every human society there has been a multitude of workers—whether slaves or nominally free matters not—who were engaged, day in, day out, in monotonous tasks of physical labour. Science has abolished this 'curse of Cain'. It has done so by substituting *machine power* for *hand power*—a process begun ages ago by the domestication of animals, the invention of the wheel, the water-mill, the windmill, and other contrivances, but carried immeasurably further in the last few generations. The work of the world can now be done, not indeed without physical effort, but, broadly speaking, without drudgery. Machines are for us what slaves were for earlier civilizations. But it remains for us to control the machines. We cannot do that until we are agreed between ourselves as to the purpose which should direct their use. This brings us back to the question of motive—to the moral issue discussed above.

From time immemorial men have feared starvation for themselves and their dependents. In every human group there was a limit to the available resources—a limit due to natural causes, to the 'niggardliness of Nature', as it then seemed, a limit that might be reached in any season through a failure of the local crop. The word 'famine' carries with it associations of this state of affairs and of the

corresponding state of mind. The existence of a famine did not mean that the whole world was short of grain or some other necessary product. The seven lean years in Pharaoh's Egypt may have been years of plenty in Mesopotamia, just across the Arabian desert. 'Famine' implies a local shortage of a kind which, under the prevailing conditions, could not be relieved from outside sources.

'Famines' are to-day a thing of the past. In so far as they still exist, they are a survival of conditions which science has rendered obsolete—or rather, has enabled statesmen to render obsolete. This is due to two causes—Abundance and Interdependence, the conquest achieved by agricultural chemists over 'the niggardliness of Nature', and the improvement in means of communication and transport which has, practically speaking, abolished the obstacle of distance.

If Science has rendered possible the disappearance of drudgery and of the fear of want and destitution, twin curses that have brooded over the life of man since the Stone Age, why has it not made the world a happier place? Why are unnumbered millions of mankind still overworked and underfed? And why are the peoples of the world ranged in opposing camps competing between themselves for wealth and power, as though the supply of each were limited, so that one side must inevitably go short?

The answer is simple. The cause of these troubles does not lie in external conditions. There is power enough and to spare to do all the world's work.

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

There are resources enough and to spare to meet the needs of all the world's inhabitants. The cause of the trouble is in men's minds. Too many of them still think of 'power' as Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar thought of it, not as the people of Niagara Falls think of it. Pharaoh's power was the power of a man, enforced by his personal mastery, as embodied in his sceptre, a glorified Big Stick. The power of the Niagara River, on the United States-Canadian frontier, the first truly modern political frontier, is not personal power but common power, power controlled and pooled for the benefit of those who dwell in its neighbourhood, power diverted from running to waste and used for 'the relief of man's estate'.

Similarly, men still think of wealth as the old-fashioned misers thought of it, as a heap of gold or jewels or other personal possessions, to be used for personal gratification, a perpetual series of banquets and other enjoyments. They do not yet think of it, as the Finance Ministers or Treasurers of democratic States are beginning to think of it, as a stream of Common Wealth that passes through their hands to be directed into the channels where it can minister best to the general improvement of the life of the community.

The failure of men's minds to keep up with the change brought about in external conditions by the Industrial Revolution is due to two distinct causes. Neglect to distinguish between them is responsible for much of the pessimism of the present day.

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

The first of these causes is simply ordinary human conservatism. Man is a sluggish creature. It takes a shock to awaken him to the need for revising his preconceived ideas—the ‘stab of thought’, as one thinker has called it. It needs time for men to form new habits. Even learned men, whose daily duty it is to think and whose stock-in-trade is ideas, need time to adjust their minds to new conditions. It took the historians a hundred years to see clearly what was happening before their eyes and to formulate it in the term ‘Industrial Revolution’. Is it surprising that it should have taken even longer for the ordinary man to understand what was going on and to realize its consequences for the world as a whole and himself in particular? Is it surprising, in other words, that there is a *time-lag* between the movement of events, set in motion by science, and the movement of men’s minds? In earlier ages this discrepancy did not exist, because the external world was, for all practical purposes, as stable and motionless as the mind of the ordinary man. Both indeed were perpetually on the move. But it was the kind of movement which only becomes perceptible after a century or at least a generation—the movement of a glacier rather than of a torrent. To-day science has injected into the external world the dynamism of a torrent, whilst most men, in their own thinking, keep to the *tempo* of the glacier. The result is the maladjustment that we see around us—old-fashioned ideas, programmes, watchwords, and alas! even battle-cries being applied to conditions for

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

which they no longer have any relevance, territories conquered for their booty in an age of abundance, territories barricaded against the world's commerce in an age of interdependence.

This is one explanation of how it came about that the League of Nations was launched into a world which was not at all prepared for it. Several centuries of controversy preceded the Reformation. At least a hundred years of discussion paved the way for the French Revolution. But who, in Europe, America, or Australasia—not to speak of Asia and Africa—was discussing the League of Nations, and the problems involved in it, in the generation that culminated in 1914?

How is this difficulty to be overcome? What can be done to enable men's minds to catch up with events? There are two remedies—education and experience. We have not been fortunate enough to receive our education first and to gather our experience later, as parents generally desire for their children. We have been compelled to make up for our previous sluggishness by being exposed to the hard school of experience. As a result, we all know to-day that the League of Nations represents not a panacea but a problem. What remains is to apply our minds to it. After a generation spent largely in day-dreaming, we are on the threshold of a period of *political education*.

This brings us to the second and more fundamental reason for the discrepancy between men's thinking and the external conditions of the present-

day world. This lies in human nature itself—in the inherited qualities which constitute a large part of our make-up.

At this point we must make an excursion into biology.

Much of the pessimism and disillusionment of to-day is due to the fact that Science has refuted the belief in Progress, in the form in which it was held—and held almost as an article of faith—by our grandfathers.

Up to about fifty years ago it was the accepted view among biologists that 'acquired characters'—that is to say, physical and mental characteristics which a living organism took on during its own life-time—were transmitted from one generation to another together with the original inherited make-up. It was this belief which enabled the early social scientists to have so confident a view about the social progress of mankind. They thought that biology gave them the authority to look forward to a steady process of development in human nature under the influence of a rapidly improving environment. Improved conditions would lead to an improvement in human nature, and this, in its turn, would lead to a further improvement in conditions. Thus, by a process akin to that of compound interest, the gains would be increasingly multiplied on both sides till, in the course of a very few generations, the blessings of Western civilization would be extended over the face of the globe and man everywhere, in the ancient East and in primitive Africa, would be

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

ready to live harmoniously under Western institutions, and, in the words of Tennyson, echoing the popular science of his day, to accept the authority of a single government, 'the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World'.

We know to-day that these hopes were unwarranted. Acquired characters are not inherited—at least not in any form or degree which are relevant for sociologists and political scientists. For all practical purposes, the material of human nature, the stock of instincts and impulses, of qualities and attitudes, with which our statesmen have to contend is the same as that with which not merely Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar but the tribal leaders of the Stone Age had to deal. Every baby that is born—in so far as it has not been affected by pre-natal influences—is a Stone Age baby. This enables us to see the full dimensions of our problem. It is the problem of primitive man in the modern world: or, to be more exact, *of small-scale man in a large-scale world*.

We are each of us small-scale men or women. We each of us carry about within ourselves an inherited make-up, the raw material of our personality, that has come down to us, through unnumbered generations, from the time when the human species was living in diminutive social groups, each of them very narrowly restricted in space. How can we expect a Stone Age make-up to adjust itself to the conditions of an age of interdependence?

The answer is that, judging from the experience

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

of human history, such an adjustment ought not to be impossible of attainment. For if their Stone Age make-up has not prevented men from becoming Athenians and Romans, Englishmen and Frenchmen, citizens of the United States and of the British Commonwealth, there is no reason in the nature of things why men should not enlarge their habitual horizon, their range of social consciousness and social obligation, to include the entire world. It was the first step—the step from the cave to the village, from the tie of blood to the tie of neighbourhood—which was the hardest; for a village with its division of labour, its producers and traders and artisans, is already a world in miniature. Nevertheless, as the political history of mankind in the six or seven generations which have elapsed since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution has abundantly demonstrated, the problem of man's adjustment to a world-wide environment involves the overcoming of very serious obstacles, and we shall make little progress in solving it until we have more thoroughly understood their nature and measured their extent. It is largely because in 1918 and the succeeding years so many of the devotees of 'internationalism' ignored these hidden difficulties in their path that we find ourselves where we are to-day. For to preach doctrines and to propose schemes which assume that 'internationalism' is congenial to ordinary men and women is not merely to embark on a fruitless activity. It is to stir up a counter-movement that derives its motive force

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

from some of the deepest recesses of human nature.

The right approach to the problem is not to present men with some full-blown scheme of 'world unity' and to seek to enlist their support for it—a support the measure of which is often in inverse proportion to the convert's understanding of the subject. It is to begin from the opposite end and to ask, what is the *smallest* change in our established social and political habits and arrangements which will enable mankind to reap the benefits of the age of power, abundance, and interdependence? What we need to solve our problem is not the *greatest possible change* but the *least possible change*, a change *just sufficient* to enable small-scale man to enjoy the material benefits of the large-scale world, with all the possibilities of a better life that they open out to him, without causing him inward unhappiness, without exposing him to the disharmony which the Industrial Revolution has brought on so many peoples, from Japan to Central Africa. 321.641

Once we look at the problem in this light it assumes more manageable proportions. 2.718

Most men will always live for most of the time in small-scale societies of a kind congenial to them. But that has not prevented the development of large-scale social and political institutions in the past, and it need not prevent a still further development in the future. The village grocer, the policeman at the portals of the House of Commons, whence a quarter of the world is governed, and the porter

at the League of Nations are all, we may presume, small-scale men. But the two last are not thereby impeded in their daily task. The adjustment required from men to-day is, indeed, far *less* difficult than that required at the earlier stages which have been successfully surmounted. At some time or other the village grocer's ancestor became a conscious Englishman: that involved a greater enlargement of outlook than what is now required of his descendant. For we are not asking of the ordinary man that he should spend his life amongst 'foreigners', any more than British patriotism demands of a Devonshire grocer that he should live among Yorkshiremen. We are only asking that, in some of his activities as a *citizen*, the ordinary man of to-day should accustom himself to *enlarge* his vision so as to bear in mind that the *public affairs* of the twentieth century are *world-affairs*.

So far as the vast majority of mankind are concerned, the forming of such a new habit of mind would be sufficient to meet the requirements of our problem. It is not necessary that most men should be world-minded *all the time*. All that is necessary is that most of the citizens of the advanced and responsibly governed countries should be world-minded for *some of the time*—the relatively little time that is needed for the formation of a judgement on major issues of policy. In this connexion it will be understood how important it is that these issues should be presented to them by statesmen in a simple and easily intelligible form. A generation

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

ago General Smuts remarked that, if the British Commonwealth was to hold together, the issues on which agreement was necessary between its various peoples must be reduced to the simplest terms. This is even more applicable to the issues on which agreement is sought between all the civilized peoples. This is a psychological and political truth which was better understood by the framers of the Kellogg Pact than by the authors of the Covenant.

But, if we have eased the strain on the ordinary man by making allowance for his innatè predilection for life in what Bergson has called a 'closed society', we are still left with the question as to who is to carry on the day-to-day international activities of our interdependent world. This is the problem of the one per cent., or less, of the citizens of the leading peoples on whom falls the actual task of living in close contact with 'foreigners' and working out in detail the innumerable adjustments required for the attainment of reasonably harmonious large-scale conditions of life.

These are the 'articles of export', as they have been called—the diplomats, the foreign correspondents, the commercial travellers, the financiers, the trade union and other professional organizers, the writers and artists, and many others whose skill or inclination has turned them into 'international men' of one kind or another. For these, who are living *all the time* in the 'open world', special qualities and a special attitude of mind are required. Some of them acquire this purely by dint of experience:

some have been aided by education, of a type that has been developed in recent years: some, the best of all, seem to be born to it. There are, however, others who are congenitally incapable of acquiring it and find an international atmosphere, which compels them to associate with 'foreigners', a constant cause of bewilderment and irritation. These form the grit in the machinery of international relations. Good, kindly souls as they often are in their dealings with their own kith and kin, they would have been happier in a village. They provide a vivid illustration of the special need of vocational guidance for those who contemplate embarking on an international career.

The Short-distance Problem

We are now in a position to fix our eyes for a few moments on the nearer scene, which it is not the main purpose of these pages to analyse.

As we have already said, the most baffling feature about it is that it is a state of deadlock—political, intellectual, and moral.

Does not our historical and general survey throw some light on the causes of this deadlock?

The moral deadlock, though the most important, we will touch on very briefly. It needs little further analysis. The present rulers of Germany, through the powerful means at their disposal, have been responsible—knowingly and actively responsible—for causing more human suffering than has ever been inflicted before by any body of men in power.

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

Attila's record is spotless compared with theirs. It is right that we should bear this in continual remembrance, not only because, in such a case as this, moral indignation is a public duty, but also because of the underlying reason for this explosion of cruelty. It is due to the fact that the prevailing philosophy, under the influence of which these actions have been committed, cares nothing for human personality. It treats men as instruments for other ends—ends which, when they are examined, turn out to be non-human ends. Non-Germans are sacrificed because they are as dirt compared with Germans. But Germans themselves are sacrificed because, as individuals, they are as nothing compared with Germany. But what is this Germany which is beyond men, women, and children, and equally beyond good and evil? Is it not, in the most literal sense, a *false god*—a modern Moloch?

To get to the root of the moral issue which divides us from the present rulers of Germany we should have to retrace the whole religious history of mankind.

But it is with the political aspect of this deadlock that we are more immediately concerned.

When we consider the problem on this plane, it becomes apparent that, from our standpoint—from what one might call the standpoint of twentieth-century common sense—the rulers of the Totalitarian States are not so much immoral as old-fashioned. They seem to be suffering from a kind of atavism,

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

which leads them to project into the modern era attitudes and policies, reminiscences of Odin and Valhalla, which have become meaningless in the light of present-day facts and processes.

In the full tide of the age of Abundance and Interdependence they use the language of the long ages of Drudgery, Penury, and Isolation. Power for them still means the power of man over man rather than the power of man over Nature. A neighbour for them is still a potential enemy, spying for an opportunity of loot. Two neighbours constitute two enemies and a possible war on two fronts, which, with a little exaggeration, becomes an 'encirclement'. Countries endowed with natural resources which their inhabitants are only too anxious to sell in the world-market are stores of treasure jealously withheld from a hungry warrior tribe. The laws of Supply and Demand are abolished, to be replaced by the ancient rule of Smash and Grab. Political Economy, as we have understood it in the West for 150 years, is discarded—or rather, it is treated as an annex to the art of war. The Quartermaster's office is the centre round which revolves the economy of the Totalitarian State.

From this deadlock no escape is possible by compromise. Between organization for war as a means of national enrichment and organization for normal twentieth-century life there is no middle course; for war to-day is totalitarian: it swallows up all other social activities. All that we can do is to use our own resources—happily far superior to

THE PROSPECTS OF CIVILIZATION

those of these latter-day Isolationists—to organize resistance against their atavistic frenzy, in the confident belief that, in due course, it will pass away under the impact of twentieth-century facts and that then the process of rational and neighbourly discussion between the peoples of Europe, great and small, can be resumed.

In the last analysis, the *political* problem of Europe to-day can be summed up in a single sentence. It is the problem of the political immaturity of the German people—an immaturity the causes of which lie deep in German history and the German character with its strange mixture of robustness and docility ('vigorous submissiveness' as Madame de Staël called it in 1810), of cloudy romanticism and industrious addiction to detail. It is this which, under Prussian leadership, led Germany some eighty years ago to lose touch with the other peoples of the West and to pursue a path of her own, in the course of which she has already waged four European wars.

To explain the causes of this strange immaturity or aberration, and still more to prescribe a remedy for it, would transcend the limits of these pages. It is enough to say that, until that chronic condition has yielded to treatment, the progress of international co-operation will be delayed. Europe will remain a politically backward Continent and the statesmanship of the democracies, which in happier circumstances would be fully employed in breaking down prejudices surviving from outworn condi-

